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South West London Practice Nursing Project

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London Assembly and Mayor of London Scrutiny Report: "Access to Primary Care"

South West London Strategic Health Authority funded this project after the London Assembly/Mayor of London said Primary Care Trusts must help G.P.'s develop appropriate terms and conditions of employment for practice nurses (P.N.'s) like ensuring access to London Allowance and training/development. This project also followed on from local concerns about the governance and professional accountability of local P.N.'s.

Phases of the project

- **Phase One:** identify terms & conditions
- **Phase Two:** consult Expert Advisory Group (to review findings & recommendations)
- **Phase Three:** implement recommendations

Methods

- Local Consultation: Local Medical Committees, Professional Executive Committee Chairs, Local Practice Nurse Forums.
- A survey of P.N.'s using a local Professional Development Plan for P.N.'s.
- Questionnaire items locally developed with P.N.'s
- Random sample of practices in 5 PCT areas
- Interviews with the self selected sample of P.N.'s
- SPSS data analysis
- Ethical advice from LREC & Wandsworth PCT Primary Care Research Centre

Survey response rate

- Overall response rate 45% (n=63)
- Variable response rate:
 - good for 'practice nurses' > 45% (n=55)
 - poor for HCA's, nurse specialists/practitioners
- In five PCT areas: approx 600 qualified P.N.'s
- Sex imbalance: only 1 male P.N. identified

Overview of main findings

Findings were grouped under the following themes:

- Workforce issues
- Professional accountability
- Performance appraisal
- Job titles & role descriptions
- Hours of work
- Salaries & grades
- Supplements & entitlements
- Clinical practice/activities
- Training & development needs

A small set of highly relevant themes are presented here.

What was said about job titles?

- G-grades had 3 sorts of job title:
 - Practice Nurse, Specialist Practitioner, Lead Practice Nurse...
- H-grades had 8 sorts of job title:
 - Practice Nurse, Nurse Practitioner, Practice Sister/Nurse, Senior Practice Nurse (Specialist Practitioner), Nurse Manager, Specialist Nurse/Practice Nursing, Specialist Practice Nurse (Manager), Specialist Practice/Nurse Manager...

Who got London Allowance

- 33 respondents (of 49) in four outer London PCT areas said they didn't receive Outer London Allowance
- 6 respondents (of 11) in one inner/outer London PCT area said they didn't receive Inner London Allowance

Variations in salaries & grades

- Forty two respondents (n=42) with the same job title ('Practice Nurse') said they are graded 'E' to 'H'
- Interviews with a small sub sample of P.N.'s show P.N.'s are often paid more per hour than they think they are
- The same job title attracted different grades within and between different PCT areas

Who got appraised in 2003/4?

- 41.7 percent say they were appraised by
 - G.P. (70%)
 - Senior Nurse (17%)
 - Practice Manager (17%)
- 51.7 % said they weren't appraised (G-grades)

The skills of practice nurses

- Local P.N.'s are increasing their skills
- Skills once thought of as additional to the role in 2001/02 are now found to be some of the most regularly performed aspects of the P.N.'s role

What practice nurses said about terms & conditions

"I had to take one month off without pay following compulsory retirement. I now work fifteen hours a week and was told that this was to be for six months only. No contract as yet but the practice is in the process of doing this." (Practice Nurse)

"Question: why are we classed as not working for the NHS, when general practice is the gateway to the NHS? The GP's are contracted to the PCT, who pays them? - The NHS. It affects our rights to Agenda For Change. We do not get the allowances that nurses in hospitals have" (Practice Nurse)

"I personally think practice nurses get a raw deal because we're employed by GP's. The terms & conditions and salaries are made at the discretion of the G.P. and some don't have a clue. We're at the forefront in having to complement NSF's and everything else. Our workload has increased tremendously but some of our terms and conditions and salaries are poor. Why can't we have the similar status as Health Visitors and District Nurses, be employed by the Trust and have better working conditions?" (Practice Nurse)

Interim recommendations (Issues for consideration by Expert Advisory Group)

- Local registers of practice-employed nurses
- PCT employment contracts for P.N.'s
- Model of professional accountability
- Harmonization of job titles, salaries/grades
- Written contracts of employment
- Greater awareness of:
 - Entitlements/supplements
 - Enhanced skills of practice-employed nurses
- Greater access to paid training & development

Areas for further work

- Skill mix and practice investment policies
- Meeting education/training needs
- Model(s) of professional support & accountability
- Mapping job description, contract & salary/grade
- What nursing practices are appraised?
- Views about PCT's employing P.N.'s